

2
IGNORANCE *the* DESTRUCTION of GOD's
PEOPLE ; *and the Ways and Means to pre-*
vent it.

BEING THE
S U B S T A N C E
O F
Two DISCOURSES

On H o s. iv. 6.

My People are destroyed for Lack of Knowledge.

PREACHED in the

Parish Church of SUTTON-COLDFIELD in *War-*
wickshire, in the Year 1763.

By *the* Rev. JOHN RILAND, M. A.
CURATE of the said Parish.

*This is Life eternal, That they might know Thee
the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom
Thou hast sent. John xvii. 3.*

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P R E F A C E.

*THE Author of the following Treatise begs Leave to inform the Reader, That the Reason of his composing it, and sending it into the world, is the daily View which He has of God's people living in the greatest Ignorance, and the frequent View which He has of their dying in the same. He hopes that some Souls, now on the broad Road to Destruction through Ignorance, may be turned into the narrow Way of Life through the Attainment of Knowledge. Then we shall not see so many dying like Negotius.**

As the Author trusts that the present work was wrought under the influence of God's teaching Spirit, and by the Rule of his unerring word, so He earnestly recommends it to God for his continued Blessing on the Reader; praying, that it may be an Instrument in God's Hand of turning Him from darkness to Light, if now in the dark; of strengthening Him, if He be in the Light.

* See his Character and dying State at Page 23—25. and his Epitaph at Page 36.

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IGNORANCE, &c.

Hosea iv. 6.

*My PEOPLE are DESTROYED for LACK
of KNOWLEDGE.*

✠✠✠✠ **ETHINKS** we should be greatly alarm-
✠✠✠✠ **M** ed at the sound of these words: That
✠✠✠✠ we should, like the Virgins, when at
✠✠✠✠ midnight there was a cry made, "Be-
" hold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to
meet him;" be roused up to the instant trim-
ming of our lamps.

Hear the WORD of the LORD. This is the
introductory Call that ushers in what is spoken
in this chapter. The LORD GOD, my brethren,
spake these words: Does God speak? Then
Man should be all attention. "Speak Lord,
" for thy servant heareth," should be the lan-
guage of our submissive hearts. He that hath
ears to hear, let him hear. Is it God's solemn
charge to his prophet, *Son of man, all my words
that I shall speak unto thee, receive in thy heart,*

and bear them with thy ears? Let the same saying then sink equally down into your ears: Take heed how ye hear.

But mark this: *To, and of whom* does God speak? *His people the children of Israel. Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel.* v. 1. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* v. 6. Let this be particularly noticed. Let this Circumstance awaken your attention. But the question is, Who are *God's people*? We Christians. If real ones, then we are God's people of a truth; if but nominal, we are still by profession his. In our Church-prayers we all call ourselves God's people. In either case God is the speaker; we are the hearers. And who are the *children of Israel*? The Jews. They *were*. Who *are*? Christians. *We* are, or ought to be, what St. Paul calls all real Christians, *The Israel of God.* Gal. vi. 16. Christians are the "true Israelites." To *us* God speaks, whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear. With awful attention let us each say, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak concerning me."

And *what* does God speak? *My people are destroyed* — Dread saying! The people of God lost, perishing, destroyed! "But destroyed," may some say: "What! Does *destruction* come upon them? Upon us, us *Christians*? What, Christians destroyed? Christ is a *Saviour*: Christians, in him, must be *saved*: and how can the *saved* be *destroyed*? 'Tis a contradiction: 'Tis an impossibility. No, no. The expression contains no such fearful matter. Let us not mistake

God's

God's meaning. Let us understand him aright. Let us be comforted ; and reason the case thus : God did indeed permit the *destroying sword* to come amongst *his people Israel* of old, and he may for wise reasons permit some murderer to kill the *bodies* of *his people* now, and after that they have no more than they can do : but he will *save* our *souls*. God turneth man to destruction ; and says, " Return ye children of men." He delivers us only to satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth ; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Let us not then be dejected, but take courage. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not ; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence ; he will come and save you, Thus we are safe."—— Poor people ! What miserable arguing ! What delusive reasoning ! What perverting, what resting of scripture to your own destruction ! You, influenced by the tempting enemy, say, *It is written*. Let me answer, like the tempted Saviour, *It is written again*. Are not these the express words of Scripture, " This is *life eternal*, that they might *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent ?" *John* xvii. 3. Is life, not *temporal*, but *eternal*, the issue of the *knowledge* of God ! what then must be the *destruction* that is consequent to the *lack of that knowledge* ? Yet

this is the only cause of the destruction here spoken of by the prophet ; for let God finish his short, but full speech : *My people are destroyed* — How ? Why ? For what reason ? — *For lack of knowledge.* O foolish people, Did ever, or can ever God take away in his anger the *bodily* life of his people because they would not know him, and then raise their *souls*, departed without this knowledge, to life everlasting ? No. The destruction in such case reaches body and soul. The soul is destroyed ; and it's destruction must be like itself, in proportion to its own nature, eternal also. This implies punishment, pain, and torture ; all infinite in quality and quantity. This dire destruction passes human comprehension. Horrible to tell : how much more horrible to feel ! Hear it again ! *The soul is destroyed.* — But what does God mean by lack of knowledge ? It is, as if he had said, “ My people do not know me : They have no knowledge of what I am, what I have been, and what I am doing, what I say, what I require, what I have promised to them, what I have threatened against them. And because they know me not, they love me not, serve me not, care for me not, and live without me in the world. And they know not their own selves. Not to know me argues themselves unknown. They see not what they are, what their nature is, what their heart is ; how they stand at a distance from, or against me ; nor how they are to return to me. They have none of this knowledge of themselves. They are born ignorant, live ignorant, and die ignorant. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*”

Hear

Hear ye people of God, ye who profess and call yourselves Christians, and yet lack knowledge ; you are eternally destroyed. Destruction of body and soul in hell is upon you. I dread the farther proof of this in the sequel. Hereafter, before we have done, 'twill appear too undeniable evident, I fear. I could wish I might pray to God that I might never prove this. But I must not pray to God to prove any thing which is not the truth, or against it. I cannot prove God a liar. Let God be true, but every man a liar. Gladly should *I* be proved one. " Desirous as I am of speaking the truth, here " I shall rejoice to be convicted of falshood." But *I myself* desire to prove nothing. From all blindness of heart ; from pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy ; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness ; and from all false doctrine, may the good Lord deliver me. May he inspire me with himself ; his own will, temper, and spirit ; and let the divine inspiration breathe out the divine glory. Let the salvation of immortal souls, which are now daily perishing around us for lack of knowledge, urge me on in the handling of this point. And let the case be determined, as far as possible, by reasoning with a Christian spirit upon God's infallible Book. What cannot now be settled, to the conviction of all parties, must be left to the day of trial at God's bar, when the determination will be final : To that awful day, when I must answer for having spoken, and you for having heard these things. Oh that both speaker and
hearer

hearer may give up their accounts with joy, and not with grief!

I have now but to beg, your patient hearing, to entreat your candid attention. If you will give me your ears, you shall have my mouth, my head, and my heart. Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud; for the Lord hath spoken. Incline your ear, and come unto him; hear, and your soul shall live. But if ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears. Let me remind you, that you are not at liberty to refuse attention, or to give it, as is most pleasing to your own carnal self-will. No: If you hear not these words, you have no part or lot in the matter of salvation by them. Your hearing or not hearing will shew whose you are, and to whom you belong. And take with you these Scriptures. *John* viii. 47. He that is of God heareth God's words: Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. 1 *John* iv. 6. He that knoweth God, heareth us: He that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. *John* xviii. 37. Every one that is of the truth, *says the Saviour*, heareth my voice. *John* xiv. 24. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings. You see, that you are as much concerned in the hearing, as I am in the speaking of God's word.

Thus prepared, myself for speaking, and you for hearing, we will take occasion from these words, more largely, to observe

I. That

I. That there is amongst God's (professing) people great *ignorance* in religious matters, and want of spiritual divine *knowledge*.

II. That the *consequence* of this is *fatal* : it ends in the destruction of the *soul* : the soul of the people is *destroyed*.

When these observations are made good from God's word ; and confirmed, as far as the case will admit, by an appeal to experience and matter of fact, we will then

III. Propose the *ways* and *means* to *prevent* this destruction.

I. To be ignorant, and lack divine knowledge, is natural. We were created in God's image ; and consequently had, in that first creation, the knowledge of God. When by sin we fell from God, this divine knowledge was lost. And as long as we do not put on the new man, which is *renewed in knowledge* after the image of him that created us ; so long we are bewildered and overwhelmed in a sinful state of blindness and ignorance. St. Paul, proving the universal corruption of all mankind from the Old Testament, says, *There is none that understandeth*. Rom. iii. 11. *The way of peace have they not known*. ver. 17. And elsewhere he describes the unconverted, as *having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the Life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the Blindness of their heart*. Ephes.

Ephes. iv. 18. We are not to confine this sad description to the case of any peculiar people there spoken of ; for 'tis our own state, the state of every one by nature. The same Apostle says, in general terms, *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* 1. Cor. ii.

14. The sinful language of our rebellious hearts to God is, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways : What is the Almighty that we should serve him ? Or what profit should we have if we pray unto him ?* Job xxi. 14. 15.

This then being our case by nature, are we recovered from it ? A light it is true, is come into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not abide in darkness : But have we profited by that light ? Can it be said of us, “ ye were darkness, but are now light in the Lord ? ”

We indeed, the professing people of God in this enlightened Land, readily enough speak of the ignorance of our fellow-creatures in heathenish kingdoms ; and (like some travellers into foreign countries, who have a better knowledge of them than their own) can give a better account of their ignorance abroad than of our own state of knowledge at home. Being born and bred in this Christian country, being descended from Christian parents, and being received by baptism in our infancy into the congregation of Christ's flock, thinking that we see some of that flock living all around and amongst us, we are apt to look upon ourselves as a knowing people ; saying (on the strength merely of these

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circumstances, “ surely this is a wise and understanding people; God hath not dealt so with other nations; neither have the heathen knowledge of his Laws.” This is the language of our proud, self-conceited hearts. But I fear upon trial it will be found, that the generality and bulk of our own Christian selves are as ignorant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is the power of God to salvation, in the soul, as those who never heard it’s joyful sound. Let matter of fact speak upon a fair enquiry. Let God’s professing people be examined; and their want of divine knowledge will be flagrantly evident. This then is the proposition to be laid down: That the majority of our own christian countrymen are ignorant of all saving power in the Gospel-scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ; yea, as ignorant as the heathens. Let us appeal to experience and matter of fact; and, to make the case as plain as possible, we will represent it in some supposed characters and feigned names.

Jesus Christ has plainly and expressly asserted in his infallible Word, That *except a man be born again, of water and the spirit, he cannot see, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* John iii. 3. 5. Now ask *Julius*, What being born again is? And whether he himself is born again? And what does He say? ’Tis painfully curious to observe, in what a variety of ways He is labouring for an answer; and how many different methods He has of coming off from the Question. At one time *Julius* seems to know not what you mean: He is rather

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amazed

amazed and perplexed; being at a loss to make any answer which is intelligible. At another time, *Julius* would explain away the whole reality of this essential work, by observing, that it is figurative language; that the Easterns dealt in high metaphors; and that when a rational interpretation is given of the new birth, it means only *reforming a man's life by the power of his own virtuous resolutions*. But when it is pressed upon him, that the children of God are expressly said to be born—not of the *Will of man*, but of *God*; that they are *God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus* unto good works; and must be renewed in the spirit of their minds. John i. 12. 13. Ephes. ii. 10. iv. 23. Why then *Julius* pretends to be satisfied in this case; because, whatever the words mean, he was, he says, *born again* by being baptized in his infancy. His life is directly inconsistent with, and contrary to the *Scripture* (which are the only *true*) evidences of being born again: And yet he seems satisfied in taking it for granted that he *was* regenerated at the font. Whether he is regenerated *now*, and what is *present state* is with regard to the experimental knowledge of regeneration in his heart, and the fruits of it in his Life, he knows not, heeds not, nor enquires after. He says, He *was*; and therefore concludes he *is*, born again of the spirit. At another time, *Julius* affects to ridicule the doctrine of the new Birth, as unintelligible nonsense; and presently after, with a spirit of anger, resentment, impatience, and dissatisfaction

fiendness in his own mind, talks against *inward feelings*, &c. The Salvation of *Julius's* Soul depends upon his being born again; and such is his knowledge of it.

The same Jesus Christ says, *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Mat. xviii. 3. Ask *Flatus* what conversion is? And to give some account of his own conversion; that we may know what his experience is, as a converted Christian. *Flatus* tries to evade the answer; he would seem as if he did not hear. He would shift off the discourse to some other subject. His ignorance flashes him in the face; and his inexperience confounds him. The truth is, He is no more able to give a satisfactory answer than to read a chapter in the Bible in an unknown tongue. Yet this man thinks himself a Christian. We will try this in the case of *Flavia*.

St. Paul describes the Christian in this manner: *If any man be in Christ, he is a new Creature: Old things are past away; behold, all things are become new.* 2 Cor. v. 17. Now ask this woman, whether she is thus in Christ? And whether she has found by experience, That in her heart and life old things are past away, and that all things are become new? *Flavia* says, "Why I don't know what
" you mean by being in Christ; but I hope
" we are all Christians, are we not? We in
" this country are born and bred Christians." She takes it for granted, as a thing of course, that not only she herself, but that every one of

her neighbours is a christian. *Flavia* never troubles her head about enquiring, Whether she has put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. *Ephes. iv. 22. 24.* Whether in her temper, life, and conversation she answers the scripture character of real christians; but supposes she is one, because she supposes all are so, one as well as another. As to her being, in her present situation, an experienced convert to, and a holy follower of Christ, she knows nothing about the matter; and if she speaks about it, only shews her ignorance the more: She knows as much about a new creation in her soul by the workmanship of God, as she does of a new creation in her body. Yet she thinks herself in the right, and doubts not her safety in Christianity. *Flavia* is a christian in her own, but not a new creature according to God's judgment: Trusting to an outward profession instead of an inward change, and putting formality in the room of Christianity; she is deceiving her soul with a religion that will avail her nothing. The Apostle has unalterably spoken, *In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. Gal. vi. 15.*

It plainly appears from the whole scope of the scriptures, that we cannot be saved without faith and repentance. Ask *Mundanus* to give you an account of his own faith and repentance, and what does he say? Why, he utters some unintelligible half sentences, backwards and forwards,

wards, saying and unsaying, aiming now at one thing, then at another, by which sounds you may gather, that he has neither one nor the other. But *Mundanus* is not always hampered in this manner, when you talk to him about his religion : He will sometimes speak clearly and roundly to the point ; and when questioned about his faith and believing, he will say, “ We are all Believers.” He takes it for granted that he is a “ Believer, for he never doubted it : “ He was always a Believer, he never was otherwise : He thinks it is the easiest Matter in the “ World to have faith in Christ, and wonders “ at those who speak of it as a difficulty.” *Mundanus* thinks those to be infidels that blaspheme Jesus Christ, and who professedly deny the scripture truths of his religion : So far he is right : But he never dreams that a mere nominal christian is as much, tho’ not in the same manner, an infidel, as they are who avow themselves to be such. He comes to church on Good-Friday, and in the third collect for the day, prays God, “ to have mercy upon, and to convert all “ *Infidels.*” and never dreams that he is praying for himself : For many years, and in many other prayers, he has observed this round of praying for his own conversion ; and yet thinks and lives just the same ignorant unconverted sinner as before. Such a believer as this knows not experimentally, that with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, that faith is the gift of God, that it is a victory which overcometh the world, that it purifies the heart, that it worketh by love, and that it is made perfect by works :

works : Without any of this experience, this man is a believer, he has faith, but it has done nothing for him ; and as for his *repentance*, “ I’m sure, says he, if I have offended God, I “ am sorry for it ; will do so no more, and be “ better for the time to come.” *Mundanus* has had this language in his heart for many years, and has made no Progress in repentance since the time he first used it : Such is the repentance of *Mundanus*, such is his religion.

I reckon it needful for a sinner to know, how his sins are to be forgiven, and himself to be accounted righteous in God’s sight. Say to *Lætitia*, What is justification ? Are you in a justified state ? In what or whose righteousness do you now stand, or hereafter expect to appear before God ? Either she says, “ I am no scholar ; it is not for me to enter into such learned points.” And then adds, that “ she thinks “ people’s heads should not be puzzled about “ faith, justification, acceptance with God, and “ such like doctrines, which they cannot understand ; that this is the way to make people melancholy or mad.” Or else, in direct opposition to the scriptures, she seeks to justify herself ; and being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish her own righteousness, will not submit to the righteousness of God. She does no-body any harm, she pays every one their own, comes duly to the church, endeavours to serve God as well as she can ; and where she fails, hopes and prays God will be merciful unto her. Thus she knows nothing of drawing nigh to God, only
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in the merits of Him who has fulfilled all righteousness, and endured the curse for us ; or standing in the view of judgment altogether on the rock of his obedience and sufferings ; but looks as far as she can to her own doings, and good intentions for her present and future acceptance with Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and will be a consuming fire to all whom He does not find in his Son, not having, *i. e.* not trusting in, their own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Such is *Letitia*.

Now I observe, that these persons, who profess and call themselves Christians, are as ignorant (with regard to any saving purpose in their souls) as the darkest heathen in the darkest country. And the case of these persons is the case of the generality of God's professing people. These are plain matters of fact. I have with sorrow and confusion seen it verified in persons and at times without number. Ask every Gospel-Minister, that knows by experience the power of Gospel-truth in his own soul, and is daily labouring to spread it in the souls of his People, whether these things are not so, and he will with lamentation own that they are. Now, I say, these being plain matters of fact, and observed in daily experience, who can deny, and say the case is not so ?

When the Apostle Paul went to preach the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent, at the famous university of *Athens*, and saw that learned city wholly given to idolatry,
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his spirit was stirred in him; and he thus accosted him: *Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious: For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD; whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.* Acts xvii. 22. 23.

Now, after what has been set forth, I may ask, Do we see nothing like this in our days? Can we make no application of the *Athenians* case to the present one of the generality of our Christian Church-people? Certainly we see nominal Christians ignorantly worshipping an unknown God. Our Länd abounds with church-goers, who will come to church on a Sunday to hear, read, and say *Amen* to prayers, which they do not understand, nor know the meaning of; and then go away, and contradict them in their lives all the week. After this they will come again the Sunday following to the same formal ignorant worship, and again the week after live as before. Thus in a continued round of mock-worship, by praying one thing and living another, and condemning themselves out of their own mouths, will have the impudence to talk nonsense before God in his own house, and tell Him lies to his face. And with regard to their hearing of God's word preached by Gospel-Ministers, they will come with prejudice or unconcernedness, speak evil of what they do not understand, take many essential parts of the discourse, with its general tendency, all in a wrong sense, pervert and misrepresent things, set themselves against it, and secretly

secretly resolve not to be bettered by it. And where this is not the case, where there is a disposition to hear and to applaud the preacher and his discourse, yet even amongst these how many speak in commendation of they know not what; and are not at all edified and improved in their Lives and conversation by what they hear? The mouth speaks one way, the heart is bent, the Life is directed another. As it was in the Prophet *Ezekiel's* days even so it is now. They come unto the Preacher as God's people cometh; and they sit before Him as God's people, and they hear his words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, He is unto them as a very lovely Song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear his words, but they do them not. Chap. xxxiii. 31, 32. Now, are not these people as truly as the *Athenians*, tho' not before their Altar, paying their unmeaning devotions to an unknown God, whom they ignorantly worship? May we not say to these people, "Ye know not what ye worship"? Judge ye. I know it to be a melancholy truth; I am sure it has caused my soul to weep.

And let it be observed, this soul-destroying ignorance, this state of religious darkness, shews itself in this Land of Christian Light. Inform much that we may take up the Apostle's saying to the people in his days, and make it to our own in these. *Some have not the know-*

ledge of God : *I speak this to your shame.* 1. Cor. xv. 34. O ye nominal Christians, ye formal professors of the religion of Christ, ye have not the practical converting knowledge of the God you take your name from : And is it not *shameful* ? Are ye not *ashamed* ? To your *shame* it is spoken.

I have said, this ignorance and want of knowledge is *general* ; it is so in a degree approaching to *universal*. It reigns in all stations of life. It prevails amongst masters and servants, young and old, parents and children, high and low, rich and poor, one with another. The lower part of mankind may, perhaps, think it ought to be no wonder that they are ignorant. Through Want of education, and inability to instruct each other, and the difficulty of access to their higher and more knowing neighbours ; through their necessity of constant working for their bread, want of scholarship to read at all amongst some, of time amongst others ; for these reasons they may be ready to plead that they of a sort of necessity must be unacquainted with the knowledge of God ; and that it ought not to be sought amongst them, but looked for only in the possession of the higher part of mankind. But we must here observe, that, however true these circumstances of the poor may be, yet they are no excuses for ignorance amongst the lowest sort of people : For there is but one way of salvation for all mankind ; the same for the poor as for the rich. And God requires, that every person,
(who

(who is saved,) in every station of life, should have the due knowledge of the one common way of salvation; there being not one method of saving this, and another of saving that person.—But waving this: If Christian Knowledge is lacking amongst the poor, is it abounding amongst the rich? Alas! through the temptations of wordly pleasures, and the deceitfulness of riches, through the pride of their human learning, being too wise to be taught, too ashamed to be thought ignorant, too proud to stoop to instruction from a sense of ignorance, and being too great to be controled, they are to be found as ignorant of all true knowledge and experience in Christianity, as the other part of mankind, their inferior Neighbours. *Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged understand Judgment.* Job xxxii. 9: See the case of these two people in the present day fitly represented by the Prophet *Jeremiah*. The Prophet complaining to God of the sins and wickedness of the people in general, of their obstinacy in not taking warning, and rejecting the word of instruction, says of the lower class of people, that He had been ready to conceive the fault, on their side, lay in their want of education, and of instruction in the way of the Lord; that He therefore betook himself to the rich, who, as they had more Light and better means of improvement in knowledge, He hoped would shew the practical effects of it in a correspondent attention and obedience; but He found the state of these people's hearts even worse

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than the former. *I said, surely these are poor, they are foolish; for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the Judgment of their God. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the Judgment of their God: But these have altogether broken the Yoke, and burst their Bonds.* Chap. v. 4. 5. And you see, so far from either of them being excused by the Prophet of God, what dire destruction He threatens shall come upon them for their lack of knowledge and obedience. *Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, i. e. the whole body of the people; and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them; a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one, that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces; because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.* v. 6.

God is without variableness or shadow of turning; and whatever temper or spirit is the subject of his complaint at one time, is the equal subject of his complaint at all times. And we may take it for granted; that, on the one side, whatever God promises to the *Jewish* people as a reward according to their knowledge of, and obedience to Him; and, on the other, whatever threatnings he denounces against them as a punishment for their ignorance and disobedience, the same He makes to us, in the like circumstances. Whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Hearken

Hearken then to God's mournful complaints and lamentations. Hear Him bemoaning Himself over his hapless people. *Hear, O Heavens; and give ear, O Earth; for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.* Isaiah i. 2, 3. *Yea, the stork in the Heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the Judgment of the Lord.* Jer. viii. 7. Be ashamed and confounded, ye professing people of God. He is forced, you see, to address himself to his inanimate Creatures; and to demand their attention, as if He despaired of gaining a hearing from you, his people. See too, tho' *God teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven;* yet He observes, that his Brute-creation are more acquainted with Him and his ways, and know their appointed ways of living according to their Creator's orders, better than his own stupid, besotted people. Blush at the ass, Thou professing Christian: Thou art wont to look with contempt upon this despicable animal: But stand still in confusion while the ass is set up to instruct Thee her inferior, and God's worse creature. Yea, let all the beasts of the earth shame Thee; let the Birds of the air confound Thee.

Hearken

Hearken once more. See what an agony God's Prophet is in! Hear how he cries out like a man well-nigh spent under the acute pains of the stone, the gout, the cholick, &c. or like a woman in travail, *My bowels, my bowels; I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace; — Jer. iv. 19.* And why this bemoaning lamentation? What is the matter? Surely some grievous punishment is coming on the Prophet himself: Surely He is lamenting the bitter fruit of his own iniquities. No, it is merely on the afflicting View of the desolation of God's people. It was because *Destruction upon destruction* was hastening towards them. V. 20. But why? What is the situation of God's people, thus to call down such vengeance upon them? Still the same that is mentioned before. *For my people is foolish, they have not known me; They are sottish children, and they have none understanding; They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.* V. 22. O ye professing People, see what heaviness and continual sorrow of heart ye give to God's Ministers by your lack of knowledge, and want of obedience to your God. You too, his covenant-People; and yet thus to deal with your covenant-God! What, and are you *unconcerned* at this? Are you *unawakened* by this? Yes; I see you unmoved by this direful case between God and you: I see you heedless, thoughtless, and careless. You see not the threatened destruction in this case is your own: You know
not

not your danger. Your souls lie on the brink of an avenging eternity; yet you are no more apprized of it than he that lies asleep on the brink of a well, on the edge of a precipice. This is a common case. "O eternal God, let the loud thundrings of thy condemning Law awaken their sleepy souls; that they may fly to thy mercy in Christ Jesus for their salvation, before they are over-taken by thy Justice for their destruction. O Lord, save thy People."——But to see what an affecting and deplorable thing a *Lack of knowledge* is, let us view it in the closing Scene of all things here below.

See yon sick Bed. There lies *Negotius*. His immortal soul, overwhelmed in ignorance, is ready to leave it's body, to appear before an infinitely wise God. Yet *Negotius* hopes he shall go to heaven, like the rest of his neighbours. He professes to have no disturbance in his conscience, and is troubled with no doubts of his salvation, no fears of his damnation. In appearance the most established Christian cannot go beyond Him in assurance. "God, he says, is merciful, and is gracious." But ask *Negotius* the *reason of the hope that is in him*; ask him the *reason why* he expects God should be merciful and gracious to him, and what his hope is *founded upon*, then he betrays his ignorance. He has the mercy of God in his mouth, but knows nothing of the only way by which that mercy can be manifested and derived to the Sons of men. His tongue speaks indeed the Name of
Jesus;

Jesus ; but he has no knowledge, no experience of that Name in his heart. The way to discern his lack of any saving knowledge of the mercy of God is to ask Him, whether the life he has lived in the flesh has been by the faith of the Son of God ? whether he has lived to Him who died for his sins, and rose again for his justification ? Whether He is in Christ a new creature ? Whether He is born again of God's spirit, and is converted ? Here he grows angry, or silent ; or shelters himself under the refuge of his being no scholar. *Negotius* was born ignorant, has remained so all his life, growing as in years so in ignorance ; and now lies upon his death-bed, having his religion to begin to learn.—And see how fit and able he is to begin that important work. His head is well-nigh gone ; his thoughts perplexed, his senses bewildered, his spirits faint and languid, all the faculties of his mind impaired and decaying to death. In his body, you may see his countenance fallen, cheeks hallow, tongue faltering, legs weak, joints tottering, and his whole frame emaciated and falling to pieces. Old age has gained ground on Him ; or his distemper is too much for him. The victory almost compleat. Death at the door. Thus lies *Negotius*. Thus equipped He is to start the christian race, to fight the good Fight of faith, and wrestle and stand against all his foes, to combat the Christian enemies in the warfare, to endure hardness as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ, daily taking up his cross, and following

ing Him through much tribulation into the kingdom of God, manfully fighting under the banner of the Captain of his Salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings, to strive to enter in at the strait Gate, and to travel the narrow way that leadeth unto Life: This is his business. Here is *Negotius*. In this situation he remains a few minutes; a convulsion comes; he expires; and his body is given to the worms. Observe this supposed Character; *supposed*, did I say? The name is *feigned*, but the Character is a *real* one; not of the *few*, but of the *many*. I have seen it, and seen it, and seen it again. I have oftentimes been put to a stand at the sight; so staggered and perplexed have I been, that I have not known, for a time, what to say to such a case. O, ye Ministers of the Gospel, who are accustomed to attend death-beds, think ye not that *I* have seen it? Know ye not that *You* have seen it? And what shall we say in this case? I must speak out. I cannot bear to see immortal souls destroyed for lack of knowledge, and sit in quiet. Silence in such an affair I cannot away with. When shall I cry out aloud and spare not, and lift up my voice, like a trumpet, if not now? I am urged, I am constrained to speak freely, to open my mouth boldly, and to speak as I ought to speak. Let me take up the sayings of *Elibu*. *I will answer also my part, I also will shew my opinion. For I am full of matter; the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold my belly is as wine which hath no vent, it is ready to burst like new bottles.*

I will speak that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips, and answer. Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles: In so doing my Maker would soon take me away. Job xxxii. 17,—22. I say then, this man's soul is lost; yea, eternally and irrevocably lost. Lest this should be still doubted or denied, we will proceed to confirm, and by accumulated proof to establish the observation.

2. That the *Consequence* of this Ignorance and want of knowledge is *fatal*: It ends universally, where it is, in the destruction of the *soul*: The soul of the people is *destroyed*.

This is much to be observed. This point calls aloud for your particular attention. Dwell upon this thought. Pass it not over slightly. Weigh and ponder this consideration. Is it no trifle. I know you will be making it a trifle. You will be saying, "Surely as I am no Scholar, some allowance will be made: We have not all knowledge alike; and only where much is given, much will be required." Deceive not your soul. The argument is against you. I must shoot you with your own arrows, and out of your own bow. You say, "Where much is given, much will be required." A great and important Truth! But see, you think it makes *for* you. You are under a delusion. It makes *against* you. Much is given *you*. Much will be required from *you*. Have you not a Bible? You may
read

read it; or you can hear it: You may pray over it, and meditate upon it. Here is the Word of Knowledge to make you wise unto salvation. You are not thus wise. What are you the better for your Bibles? With all the means of saving Knowledge in your hands you are without it. You will one day find that much has been given you; and that much will be required from you. And what is it you mean when you say, "You are no Scholar?" You understand not the learned languages. This will not be required. You have not the knowledge of salvation: This will. You, and every other sinner that is saved, must alike have the knowledge of salvation. No longer then impose this false arguing upon your soul to it's destruction. Leave off such delusive reasoning. Mark this: Through *Ignorance* and *lack of knowledge* your *soul* is *destroyed*. Let us travel in search for, and have a clearer view of this dismal object. And let the word of God be the lantern to our feet, and the light to our paths.

View the context of the afore-mentioned passages of God's Book concerning the ignorance of his people, and you will see the sinful and ruining effects of ignorance there dolefully described. You will see what a variety of *notorious sins* are the effects of this lack of knowledge. Now this furnishes us with the Proof of the soul's destruction thereby, viz. "That a life of ignorance and want of knowledge is attended with a life of Sin." So

that well might God by the mouth of David ask, *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* Psalm, xiv. 4. And the answer that they have none is furnished by the preceeding verses: The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did *understand*, and seek God. And the proof that they did not, immediately follows; They are all gone aside; They are altogether become filthy: There none that doeth good, no not one. v. 2, 3. The ignorant soul does nothing but sin; And the soul that sinneth it shall die. The wages of sin is death. Destruction is upon the sinful soul. *The wicked shall be turned into hell.* Psalm, ix. 17. *for such are the dwellings of the wicked; and this is the place of Him that knoweth not God.* Job xviii. 21. Solomon observes, *That whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: He that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.* Prov. vi. 32. This is the case in every sin as well as the particular One here mentioned. Ignorance is it's parent, and destruction it's issue. St. John, speaking of God, observes, *Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* 1 John iii. 6. The want of knowing God, you see, is evidently and necessarily inferred where sin is committed. This ignorance is the cause of sin's commission; and sin's commission proves ignorance. God, speaking of his people, says, *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said; It is a people that do err in their heart; and they have not known my ways; unto whom*

I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest. Psalm xcv. 10, 11. They erred. Why? Because they knew not God and his ways. And the effect, as usual, was fatal. Thro' the irreversible oath they could not enter into his rest. Who are concerned in this? We, as we are knowing or ignorant of God, obedient or disobedient to Him. Consult the passage as quoted by the Apostle in the 3d and 4th Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and that will determine the point. Again: The Prophet, speaking to the people of God, says, *O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not.* Jer. v. 21. What follows? *This people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart: They are revolted and gone.* v. 23. Again. *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!* Jer. ix. 1. And why this sad lamentation? The people are slain. But why? *They proceed from evil to evil; and they know not me, saith the Lord.* v. 3. *Through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord.* v. 6. Once more. The people of God will not frame their doings to turn unto their God; for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord. Hos. v. 4. They lacked the knowledge of God. And what followed this? Their not turning from their sins to Him; but going on in them to destruction. Nay, what provoking sins are there which are not caused by Ignorance and lack of knowledge?

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The chief of all heinous sins was the murder of the Son of God. This was owing to Ignorance. *We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery*, says St. Paul, *even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the Princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8. They were ignorant of God, his counsel and his ways; otherwise they would not have committed that sin. As the Want of knowledge was the cause of Christ's death, so it is of the death of his people. Himself told his Disciples, *That the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service.* John xvi. 2. And what is the reason of this cruel treatment, this strange imagination? Why, *These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.* v. 3. The same ignorant, blinded spirit that killed Christ and his people, doth also give Life to every kind and degree of persecution of them. *If they have persecuted me, saith their Lord to his disciples, they will also persecute you.* John xv. 20. This is a Truth asserted; a matter of fact experienced: But what is the reason of this cruel Behaviour? The same as before: *All these things will they do unto you, because they know not him that sent me.* v. 21. Ignorance or lack of Divine knowledge, you see, is at the root of the greatest sins. How should it be otherwise? Where there is no knowledge of God, there can be no obedience paid him. We cannot
obey

obey an unknown God. If we are ignorant of God, we cannot love Him. And as all true service proceeds from the principle of Love, consequently while we know not God, we serve him not. *Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is Love.* 1 John iv: 7, 8. See then the sad consequence of not knowing God. Let this be much attended to. Stop; reflect upon this point. Be not too hasty in passing over this consideration. Think again and again upon it. Let contemplation be deeply employed.—While we are ignorant of God, we pay Him no duty, service, obedience, worship and adoration; none, I say, that He accounts real; none that is pleasing to Him, and acceptable in his sight. Here the heart is apt to deceive. Beware you are not imposed upon by your own selves. You may think that you are right servants of God, and his true worshippers, because you have his name in your mouths, appear at his house and table, and in the outward Conduct seem to walk in his ways. This formality of service we may pay Him, and our hearts be at enmity against Him. The experienced know this. They are sure of it. This outward form and profession of worship we may have; and yet this Shew of religion, which is highly esteemed amongst men, may be an abomination in the sight of God. But, that Want of obedience follows a Want of knowledge, may be proved by the answer to this

this question ; What is this knowledge of God ?

This it is not. It is not to know God perfectly, and as He is. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for us ; we cannot attain unto it. There is a Guard set against our looking after this perfect knowledge of God. *Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ? It is as high as Heaven ; what canst Thou do ? Deeper than hell ; what canst thou know ? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.* Job xi. 7. 8. 9. Neither is it to know Him in all that fulness and clearness, in which He will be known in the after-state. *Now we see through a glass darkly ; but then face to face : Now we know in part ; but then shall we know even as also we are known.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. But on the other hand, neither is it to know merely that there is a God ; a common Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. The soul may have this knowledge, and yet be destroyed. A nominal Christian may have this knowledge, and remain utterly destitute of what truly deserves that Name. This is a partial defective, and, when alone, useless knowledge of God. Such a speculative knowledge of God had *Eli's Sons* : For it is not to be imagined that they were entirely without all knowledge of God : And yet it is observed of them, *The Sons of Eli were Sons of Belial ; they knew not the Lord.* 1. Sam. ii. 12. They had, what St. Paul calls, *the form of know-*
-ledge.

Jedg. Rom. ii. 20. But had not the power of it, in it's practical fruits, in their hearts, their lives and conversations. For the creature to know God savingly, and as He ought to be known, is for him to have a deep, practical, abiding persuasion wrought in his heart of these important truths, the influence of which are seen in the Christian Temper and Life, *viz.* That, on the one side, God is a God of truth, holiness, justice, purity, and power; on the other, of love, mercy, and compassion: That the first set of attributes have been and are offended by his sinful creatures violating his Government in the Breach of the Divine Laws; and the latter could not have been made consistent with, or to harmonize with the former, without satisfaction and atonement made, in the nature that offended, by suffering the penalty of, and paying an uninterrupted, perfect obedience to these righteous Laws. This introduces to, and implies in it the knowledge of ourselves; and the impossibility in our lapsed, guilty, impotent condition of our performing either of these things. This brings us to an acquaintance with his Son God-man Jesus Christ; whose mediation and substitution in our stead have been sufficient to make up the Breach, and purchase our salvation. To this knowledge of God, ourselves, and of Christ, must be joined an hearty application to the blessed Jesus, and a reception by faith of the fulness of his Redemption, and a conversion of heart and Life, in a restoration of them both, to God in righteousness and true holiness.

All this is wrought by the operation of God; and the whole of this saving knowledge comes to the soul by the revelations of the most holy, undivided Trinity, through the Word. *No man knoweth the Son, but the Father: Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.* Mat. xi. 27. *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* 1 Cor. xii. 3. This is the knowledge of God in the Redeemer. Thus we know, and are known. It is on all sides mutual. *I am the good Shepherd, says the Redeeming Saviour, and know my sheep, and am known of mine: As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my Life for the Sheep.* John x. 14. 15. An obediential Spirit and conduct follows and attends upon this knowledge. It is vital and practical. It is not merely a Notion floating in the head; it influences the heart, and regulates the Life. The Christian, that possesses it, has the highest esteem of, the most ardent desire after, and places his whole delight in God: He puts his whole trust and confidence in, has the most filial Fear of God; is patiently submissive to, and seeks to do the whole Will of God, serving Him with the pleasant Labour of a Life of holiness. In this also, the Christian, that knows God, is careful of meeting and enjoying God in his ordinances of worship, is watchfully observant of his providences, mindful of his presents, regardful of his Judgments, Calls, and Warnings, and a lover of his mercies. From a principle

principle of Divine Love, ruling in his heart, He gives up himself to God in his whole Life and at his death. Such obedience attends such knowledge. *Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him.* 1 John ii. 3. 4. The everlasting Salvation of the soul depends upon this knowledge. *The excellency of this knowledge is, that the wisdom of it giveth Life to them that have it.* Eccles. vii. 12. This is our acknowledgement, when in the liturgy we say *amen* to the sentence in the second Collect for peace; "O God, who art the Author of peace, and " Lover of concord; in *knowledge* of whom " standeth our *eternal Life*." And the same is implied in the prayer of St. Chrysostom; where we pray to God, to " grant us " in this world *knowledge of his truth*, and in " the world to come *Life everlasting*." We ask for knowledge, because it precedes Life; and we join Life to knowledge, because it attends upon and follows knowledge. Of a piece with this are the words already mentioned of our blessed Lord to his Father, in his prayer for his Disciples, *This is Life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.* John xvii. 3. * If,

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* The reader may find many striking considerations and observations, concerning this ignorance and knowledge of God, made from this Text, in *Anthony Burgess's* Book intitled, " 145 Expository Sermons upon the whole 17th Chapter of " the Gospel according to St. John."

This Reverend Divine was Minister of *Sutton Coldfield* in *Warwickshire*, about a Century ago. His works, especially
this

on the one hand, it is life eternal to know the only true God ; it is, on the other, as I have also said before, death eternal to be ignorant of Him. Here is implied, that the ignorant soul is destroyed for the lack of this Knowledge. Such is the fatal consequence, that the lack of this Divine knowledge is attended with a Lack of salvation, but a fulness of destruction.

Here then I rest the matter. Here is the point proved. Here lies *Negotius* dead and buried. Let us weep over his grave. Let compassion shed a tear, while we read the Epitaph.

Underneath are deposited the Remains
OF A
DESTROYED SOUL,
Born in Ignorance, bred in Ignorance,
Lived in Ignorance, died in Ignorance,
Perished in DESTRUCTION,
FOR LACK OF
K N O W L E D G E.

But cannot the dead be raised? Not dead *Negotius*. He is irrecoverably dead to all eternity. He is lost for ever. His soul is in eternal Death. His body indeed, that now *sleeps in the dust of the Earth*, must rise again, and his soul be united to it, for the sake of the greater Torment. Tho' now he *Sleeps*,
yet

this above-mentioned Volume and his "Spiritual Refinings." I would recommend to my Readers in general, and to the Inhabitants of that parish in particular,

yet will he *awake to shame and everlasting contempt*. Dan. xii. 2. And at that dreadful Day, when there will be a *resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust*; Acts xxiv. 15. And while others obtain a *better resurrection*; Heb. xi. 35; His will be a coming forth unto the *resurrection of damnation*. John v. 29. *The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the Lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death*. Rev. xxi. 8. Thine, poor lost *Negotius*. To thee thy unknown Judge will say, with *them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels*. Mat. xxv. 41. *These shall go away into everlasting punishment*. v. 46.*

But cannot the dead be raised? Yes. The dead in sin may be raised. To the living, but *dead in trespasses and sins*, Ephes. ii. 1. we will say, *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give Thee light*. Ephes. v. 14. Jesus Christ, who raises up whom he will, who displayed his power in the resurrection of the widow's Son at Naim, *Jairus's daughter, and Lazarus*, (representations these of his power to raise souls dead in sin to a life of righteousness) this same Jesus Christ says, *the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live*. John v. 25. Here is hope for quickning of sinners souls
by

* See the character, state, and death of *Negotius* in Page 23.

by Jesus Christ, (who is *a quickning Spirit*, 1 Cor. xv. 45.) that are in the road to, but not yet arrived at destruction. We may, perhaps, prevent the destruction of such souls. Wherefore we will now

3. Propose the *ways* and *means* to *prevent* this destruction.

Before I speak of, and you set about the Use of these means of coming to the knowledge of the truth, let me bespeak of you these two preparatory Things.

1. Be *concerned* about this affair. Let a deliberate thoughtfulness fix itself upon you, from considering what has been advanced. Urge on and encourage that cool and impartial seriousness which may at present have found a place in your heart. Beware at the peril of your soul how you make a Trifle of it. Contemplate it. Consider how deeply you are interested in it. Consider; The salvation of your soul is (if I may use the Metaphor) on the anvil. Give way to the stroke while the Iron is hot, before you are grown cool. The colder you get, the more difficultly will the impression be renewed. Nay, you may get so cold and hard, that the hammer may for ever after strike in vain. Wherefore, stop a moment, and meditate. Reflect also, that GOD is dealing with you. Can I mention a more forcible argument, for your attentive consideration, than that the affair of your salvation is to be settled between GOD and your own *Soul*?

2. Whatever means are proposed, be *resolved* to be *diligent* in the *use* of them. Let your
resolu-

resolution be to *take pains*, and *strive*, and *labour*. Think how many miss, and fall short of the knowledge of salvation, for want of pains-taking in the pursuit of it. Let that industry, which is seen in worldly Callings, be brought into the concerns of the soul. Be you as a *Day-Labourer* in religion. Set about, and go on with it, like a *work-man*. You will then succeed. This is well known by the wise children of this world: Let it be known from experience by the children of light. And take with you this one scripture. *Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them, strive to enter in at the strait Gate: For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* Luke xiii. 23. 24.

Hoping that these considerations have got a settled practical possession of your heart, I trust you will be fitted for the use of the ways and means of your coming to the knowledge of the Truth, the truth as it is in Jesus.

1. You must apply yourself to GOD's *Word*.

You are ignorant, and lack knowledge. The Word of God is the word of knowledge. It is Light; it giveth light and understanding unto the simple. This alone can, and this will make you wise unto salvation: for it is profitable for *instruction*; all manner of instruction in *righteousness*. If you err, it is because you know not the scriptures. Give all diligence to *reading* them. Search them: Meditate

ditate upon them; and this with humility, seriousness, frequency, and delight.

Also *hear* them. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Harken to the *Preachers* of it: I mean, such preachers as open their mouths boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel; and speak, from their own experience, of the truth as it is in Jesus. Hear it from such as labour to convince you of your fallen lost state by sin, original and actual, in heart and life; and then preach Jesus Christ to be made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. These are the glad tidings of salvation which you are to hear from the preachers of the Gospel. *Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ bath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he bath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is a partaker of his evil Deeds.* 2 Epistle John V. 9. 10. 11. O what a melancholy reflection is it to think, how many souls unprofitably hear, and hear again; are ever learning, and never able to come unto the knowledge of the truth, because they hear not Jesus Christ and his Gospel. *Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?* Rom. x. 13. 14. I am therefore

therefore obliged to say, Much depends on whom you hear. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God; because many false Prophets are gone out into the world.* 1. John iv. 1. *To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* Isaiah viii. 20. Weigh these forcible Scriptures.

2. Read occasionally, and at proper times, *other religious Books*

And here observe the like caution; read not every book that professes or seems to be a good one. Many such you may read without profit. Seek for books which are most like the sermons of those ministers, that preach the Gospel. Read those which most set forth the glory and fulness of the redeemer, enter deepest into the heart, detect its deceivings, and direct its motions; and which best explain and enforce conversion, regeneration, and experimental practical Christianity. The study of these books will assist you in the study of the Bible. Yet do not covet a multiplicity of these books; a few well-chosen and thoroughly studied will be more profitable to you. By and by you will come to have a greater relish for God's pure word. Would you know what religious books are the most proper for you to read? If you are blessed with a Gospel-minister, take his advice, and follow it. And next to Him consult those neighbours or friends, that appear most experienced in the power and life of religion. But mark this:

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Try

Try all that are recommended by the touchstone of God's Word.*

3. Avoid the reading books of *diversion and entertainment*. With these the press is every day swarming. These not only take up that time which ought to be dedicated to the Bible, and other religious reading; but they disincline the mind from these better studies, and cannot

* Amidst the many valuable religious Books, which are in the World at present, I would more particularly recommend to my Readers (who are seeking for the Attainment of, and Improvement in the Knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus) the truly heart-searching and evangelical Works of the Rev. Mr. SAMUEL WALKER, A. B. late Curate of *Truro* in *Cornwall*, and formerly of *Exeter-College* in *Oxford*.

The following Books were written by this excellent Man of God.

1. A Sermon on 1. Sam. xx. 3. at the Funeral of a young Man that was drowned as he was bathing on Sunday, June 3. 1753. Price 6d.

2. *Prepare to meet thy God*. Being two Sermons preached at *Truro* on the National Fast-Day, in 1756, from Amos iv. 12.

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be relished but by a Taste very unsuited to the Gospel; nor frequently sought for but by those who are utter strangers to a Life led by the faith of the Son of God. Yet what a fondness is there, what an eager enquiry, in this Christian country, for books of entertainment! In every reading Family almost they meet your eye as soon as you come into it. O what a proof is this of our hatred to God! How many souls are kept from God in these hiding-places! And what a general aversion is there amongst us (as a genuine consequence) to books of piety! But not only are books of *vanity* and *mere amusement* thus prejudicial to the attainment of divine knowledge; but even works of *gravity, wisdom, and learning* may keep the soul in darkness as much as the most trifling productions upon earth. History, politicks, arts and sciences, if they engross your heart, your attention, your time, as effectually shut out the light of Life, and make you to *perish for lack of knowledge*, as the silliest Tale of the silliest Romance. What if the one be read by professed Idlers, and merely to pass away the hours they know not better to dispose of; and the other for the gratification and improvement of a polite, refined, and learned Taste, yet is there no difference as to the main matter. If you are ignorant of, and inattentive to that word, which is alone able to make you wise unto salvation, it matters not what else you have been reading. However, if I should happen in any thing that I have said under this head to appear too rigorous, I am willing all should be brought

to this issue. Give me only solid, satisfying proof, that you have a saving knowledge of the Bible, and you shall have my leave for the reading whatever other books you please. Can you desire more? And yet I am perfectly easy in this grant; for when your soul truly experiences a Taste and relish for the precious Book of God; and such as are wrote after it, I shall have no apprehension of seeing your hand often filled with others.

4. You must pray.

Nothing but a Divine Power can savingly enlighten your understanding. *Every good, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.* From Him you want wisdom and knowledge. Prayer is his own appointed Way of obtaining it. Hear St. James. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* Chap.

i. 5. What a blessed Scripture! mark therein the universal free offer, God's bounteous character, and his gracious promise. But observe what is added; *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the Sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.* v. 6, 7. Your firm belief, that God will make good his promise in giving what you ask, and your steady trust and confidence in, while you persevere to wait upon him, is the condition of your receiving. The Lord of Light says to his Disciples, *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* Mat. xxi. 22. Read 1 Cor.

ii. 9—14. This shews you how needful the enlightening power of God's Spirit is for your attaining divine knowledge. You cannot understand your Bible without the divine teaching of God's Holy Spirit: And see how ready he is to give it. You would give your children good things. God is more willing to give you his Spirit. Mark our Lord's own words to his followers. *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.* Luke xi. 13. Go on in this way of God's own appointment for seeking Him, *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance,* and you will undoubtedly, in his due time, find Him. Indeed you have the infallible promise of God for this very purpose. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh, receiveth; and He that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.* Luke xi. 9, 10. And again: *If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her, as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.* Prov. ii. 3—6. Live on these Promises; plead them boldly at the throne of grace: But then beware of hastiness, and of fainting under a delay: You must wait God's time, and be contented with his

his measure, leaving it to Him to divide to you and to others severally as he willeth. *Blessed is the man, says wisdom, that beareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.* Prov. viii. 34. 35. Be there watching and waiting; and God will, according to your prayers, "grant you in this " world knowledge of his Truth; and in the " world to come Life everlasting "

You will remember that Prayer is *publick*, *family*, and *private*. Be a regular attendant on God's *publick* worship. 'Tis a delicious entertainment for the spiritual appetite of God's People. There is a variety served up at this Gospel-Feast which will suit your Taste. There is spiritual Food for your spiritual Palate. Let not every, or any trifling excuse be given for your absence. Surely Ignorance must die away, as knowledge revives, amidst such a collection of means, as this of publick worship, for the death of the one, and Life of the other. If you live in an house where the *Family* worships God; (I mean not merely as a Thing to be done just before or after Meals, at such an Hour; I mean not where this is done for form's sake, and where their common Life is not of a piece with their common prayers) bless God for your situation. However, if it be otherwise, if the rest have but the *form*, you may steal from their prayers the *power of godliness*. While they are ignorantly worshipping an unknown God, you may pray to Him, in whom you have believed, whom you know, and to whom you are known. And neglect
not

not your *private* devotions. Morning and evening, besides your publick and family-prayers, you will be on your knees before the Throne of Grace. Mind your closet-retirements as you can. Let not sloth and carelessness hinder the returns of your private devotions. Ever be watching over the closet of your own heart. See that your heart is frequently in the midst of business, or company, lifting itself up to God in warm and short ejaculations; and ever standing in a praying Form towards Him. Diligently observe your conduct in these ways. Prayer will increase prayer; and negligence will beget negligence; then in this case, prayer faints and dies away, while the power of sin revives in, and rules over you; Ignorance gains, and knowledge looseth ground. Let me add: Happy will you be, if you have a friend or two seeking the Lord together with yourself; and with whom you may often join in *social* prayer, to seek and gain this knowledge, at any time, and in any place, as opportunity serves. And, at the conclusion of such *visits* as are *christian* ones out of the abundance of the heart let the mouth speak, "Shall we go to prayer"?

5. Seek *Christian Conversation*.

This is also an eminent instrument of promoting Christian Knowledge. The lips of the wise disperse knowledge; and the lips of the righteous feed many. Many are the incitements to this practice in Holy Writ. *Exhort one another daily.—Consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works.—Teaching and*

and admonishing one another.—Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another.—Let there be such communication together as is good to the use of edifying, and which may minister Grace unto the Hearers. Heb. iii. 13. x. 24. Col. iii. 16. 1. Thess. v. 11. Ephes. iv. 29. But alas! Where is there to be seen any attention, any regard to these important Scriptures? Where is it to be seen, That the Word of God is made the rule of Life? Religion by common consent is a subject banished from all our ordinary intercourse with each other. Her Name is not mentioned, She enters not into the Thought, She is cast utterly out of sight in our friendly meetings and neighbourly visits. The church, and the closet, it is contended, are the only places where her presence is to be sought or admitted. Wretched pretence! made only by those, who never met Her, never enjoyed her presence either in the closet or church. They who have tasted of her goodness there, cannot be silent of her elsewhere. She dwells in the hearts, and out of the abundance of their hearts their mouths will speak. O strange stupidity! That rational Creatures yea that professing Christians should go to God's house on his Day, to hear and speak of God and Godliness, and never to mention Him and His ways to any purpose, all the week, in their own! Alas! Christianity is a Name: It is dead, as it has no Being in the common life and conversation of the world. It revives, as we see it stirring in social intercourse with each other. Think how many
would

would be more emboldened to become religious, did they but find countenance to speak of it ; and how many blessed sparks are quenched for want of being fanned and cherished by the Holy Breathings of others. Alas ! What can an awakened Soul do, stirred up to a serious sense of, and desire after a saving knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, of a real conversion to the Life and spirit of His religion, if he has no one enlightened and experienced Neighbour to speak to ; to ask his salutary advice, to communicate the burdened Mind, and tell what God is doing in his soul ! If you are this awakened sinner, this impressed soul, seeking God, and a saving knowledge of Him, look, ask, search whether you cannot find *one* serious Neighbour in the multitude around you, that you can open your heart to in friendly and experimental conversation, taking sweet counsel together, as companions, as guides, and as familiar friends. If you can find but *one*, bless God for having found a fellow-pilgrim ; if two, or more, let your blessing of God for them increase in proportion, and improve the happy Gift to the utmost. I need not stop particularly to tell you, for you will soon find by blessed experience, the unutterable usefulness and value of Christian conversation, and religious communication with Fellow-Travellers on the High-Way of holiness to the heavenly Canaan. Your knowledge will inflame their's ; and their's will not starve your's. Your hearts will burn within you while you have communications, and talk one

with another by the way. And for your further encouragement in this communion of Saints, take with you this one Scripture. *They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a Book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my Jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own Son that serveth Him.* Mal. iii. 16. 17.

As, on the one hand, you are to seek Christian conversation, so, on the other,

6. *Avoid that company which is worldly.*

St. John says, *The whole world lieth in wickedness.* 1. John v. 19. What fellowship then should righteousness have with unrighteousness? Come out from among them, and be ye separate. Go from the presence of a foolish man, when Thou perceivest not in Him the lips of knowledge. A companion of fools shall be destroyed. David said to God, *I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with the Dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil Doers; and will not sit with the wicked. I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.* Ps. xxvi. 4, 5. cxix. 63. Be you like David. You will then say, *all my delight is with the Saints that are in the earth, and with such as excel in virtue.* You must understand Me aright. I mean not that you must entirely shut yourself up from all inter-
course

course with your worldly neighbours, *for then,* as the Apostle says, *must ye needs go out of the world.* 1. Cor. v. 10. But “ You must not
 “ choose worldly conversation in the company
 “ of carnal people, because you like it; nor
 “ seek it, for the sake of it.” How many
 souls alas! when beginning to be seriously
 impressed with a sense of God and their salva-
 tion, are tempted by the deceitfulness of their
 own wicked hearts, and the delusive enticements
 of Satan, to seek to drown themselves, and
 hide themselves from God in such company.
 And the poisonous advice, which the men of
 the world give to serious persons, (whom they
 look upon as turning melancholy, or running
 mad; but whom God looks upon as coming
 to themselves and returning to Him) is, “ Go
 “ more into company.” Mark this enemy to
 your awakened Soul. Avoid such persons and
 their advice, as you would the plague. The
 following it will hinder your progress in Chris-
 tianity, drive away the serious impressions from
 your mind, cause you to loose the little know-
 ledge you may have attained, expose you to a
 relish for, and a delight in amusements and
 diversions, which will set you against God and
 your own soul, send you back again from God
 to mammon, and make your last state
 worse than the first. Consider too; if you
 grow concerned about your soul, and are
 brought to be seriously employed in the things
 of God; consider, that it is the work of God’s
 convincing and converting Spirit. See then,
 Quench not the Spirit. And remark, that

neglect of religious, and use of worldly conversation is the express way of grieving, and driving Him from you.

7. Be *particularly careful* in your *religious observation* of the *Lord's Day*.

Consider what precious moments you are wasting when you waste those of the Sabbath. How can you gain knowledge, if you neglect a laborious search after it on this Day of God which He has peculiarly appointed for your obtaining it. It is purposely a Day of rest from every thing else that the soul may be at leisure to advance itself in religious light and grace. Observe God's saying to his people upon the revival of His Institution of the Sabbath. *I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. Ezek. xx. 12. Hollow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. V. 20.* "The Institution of the Sabbath was a sign of God's
 " good Will to them, and their observance of
 " it a sign of their regard to Him. By this
 " God made it to appear He had distinguished
 " them from the rest of the world, and
 " designed to model them for a peculiar people
 " to Himself; and by their attendance on God
 " in solemn Assemblies on Sabbath-days, they
 " were made to increase in the knowledge of
 " God; in an experimental knowledge of the
 " powers and pleasure of his sanctifying
 " Grace."* Such is the Sabbath, and the design

* Henry in Loc.

design of it's Institution. Beware of idling it away in pleasures, amusements and wordly trifles. When you have attended the publick worship and Instruction, be careful how you spend the remaining part of the Day in private. Let me read you one forcible Scripture, where God tells you what you are not, and what you are to do on his own Day. *If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy Day, and call the Sabbath a Delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thy own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words.*—Isaiah lviii. 13. Here observe and dwell successively on the several Things you are not to do. You are *not to do your own ways*. All worldly business is here prohibited. You are *not to find your own pleasure*. This makes against all sorts of idle amusements, unnecessary recreations, and impertinent visitings. You are *not to speak your own words*. This restrains all manner of worldly conversation, and talking about those temporal affairs, which are the employment of other days. This you are not to do. This you are. You *are to make the Sabbath your Delight*. The publick and private exercises of religion, especially hearing, reading and meditating on the word of Life, must be the delight of your soul, the joy of your heart; and consequently, the pleasant labour of your Sabbath-Life. You *are to call it honourable*, and treat it as such, that The Author of it may be *honoured* thereby. You must exalt it in your affections,
render

render it by your observance of it glorious in the eyes of God and man, and thereby cast a (comparative) dishonour on other common days and things. Thus must you take yourself from every thing else, dedicating and giving yourself up to this. *You are to call and to keep it holy.* Yourself, like the day, must be sanctified thereon: You and your employments must be pious and sacred. You see your duty here on both sides. Be careful. Much depends hereon. “ If you ask now, “ for what end, and with what design, doth “ The Lord require from you so devout an “ observation of his Sabbaths? It is, That you “ may obtain the Knowledge of the true God, “ and of Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent, “ which is eternal Life. Six days you are “ commanded to labour in your Calling. And “ if at proper Intervals, such as every seventh “ day, there was no opportunity for instruction “ in righteousness, you must live and die as “ grossly ignorant of your own condition, of “ God and Christ, and every thing of a spiritual Nature, as you was born. But, think “ now for a moment. Were we endued “ with a reasonable understanding, that we “ might live as ignorant of God, as the Horse “ or the Mule? Are we made capable of “ knowing God and His Truth, and accountable to Him, whilst yet no regard is “ to be paid to this distinguished difference between us and brutes? Certainly you must “ and do say, This ought not to be the case. “ Lest it should be, God himself the one Law-
“ giver,

“ giver, able to save and to destroy, hath
 “ commanded us to remember His Sabbath,
 “ and keep it holy. He has commanded
 “ every man, on that day, as diligently to use
 “ the means of getting and increasing the
 “ knowledge of God, as on common days he
 “ uses diligence and labour in his work and
 “ calling. And such care hath the God of all
 “ grace taken; and such abundant provision
 “ hath He made, that no man, who duly
 “ observes this day, shall want any necessary
 “ knowledge either of himself, of God, or the
 “ way of salvation*.”

These ways and means of gaining the saving knowledge of God, and therefore of preventing the destruction of the soul, are of God's special appointment; and have been found true and effectual by the Blessed Experience of God's faithful People. Let me add some others, which particularly call for your regard, and may yet miss of your attention, tho' you use the other.

1. You must apply to your *Ministers* to *instruct* and *teach* you.

Of your hearkening to the *preaching* of God's Ministers in publick I have already spoken to you. Tho' this be one way of instructing and teaching you, yet here I mean your applying to them in other ways and means of bringing you to the knowledge of the Truth. You want knowledge; to whom should you go but to

* See a very valuable Tract, intituled, “ An earnest and pressing Call to keep holy the Lord's Day.” By H. Venn, A. M. Vicar of Huddersfield, in Yorkshire.

your Ministers? They are set a part by divine appointment for your service every way herein. *Because the Preacher was wise He still taught the people knowledge. Eccles. xii. 9. For the Priest's Lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the Law at his mouth; for He is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts. Mal. ii. 7.* God promises his people the Blessing of ministerial Teaching. *I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. Jer. iii. 15.* They are to feed you with food convenient for you. At all times are they to do this, in publick, in private, as the needs of your souls require. This is the people's Priviledge, and this is the Minister's Duty. But are all Ministers sensible of this? Would to God we all were; and were acting suitable to that sense! Then surely there would not, could not be so much Ignorance and lack of knowledge amongst God's professing people. But there is another Question very necessary we should put to ourselves. Has God no complaints of the Ignorance even of us? And is not our Ignorance as well as our negligence the cause of the destruction of His people? That there have been Times of such ignorance amongst Ministers, and of the fatal effects of it, first on the people, and then on themselves, the following Scriptures awfully remind us. *All ye Beasts of the Field, come to devour; yea, all ye Beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant: — They are Shepherds that cannot understand. Isaiah lvi. 9. 10. 11. O my People,*

People, They which lead Thee cause Thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. Isaiah iii. 12. The Leaders of this People caused them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed. Isaiah ix. 16. I have seen folly in the Prophets of Samaria. They prophesied in Baal, and caused my People to err. Jer. xxiii. 13. Behold, I am against them that prophecy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my People to err by their Lies and their Lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this People at all, saith the Lord. V. 32. O that we the present Shepherds of Israel may hear these words of the Lord; may mark these and various other like scriptures, and see what dreadful Judgments, what horrible Threatnings are denounced against us, if in a similar situation, and may tremble for fear! What if any of us should be Masters in Israel and yet know not in any degree by experience the saving Truths of Christ's Gospel! What if, when for the time we ought to be teachers, able to lead our People on to perfection, we have need that one should teach us even which be the first principles of the oracles of God! What if the People may justly say to any of us. "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest "Thou not thyself?" What if we should be blind leaders of the blind, will not both (O may this word be remarked; and may the sound of it alarm the souls both of Priest and People; since the situation of the latter under the blind Ministry of the former will be no excuse for

their ignorance and destruction ; for if *the Leaders of God's people cause them to err, They that are led of them will be destroyed.* Isaiah ix. 16. Nay they will, *Priest as well as People,* perish in destruction) *will they not BOTH fall into the Ditch?* God grant that this Word may cry aloud in our ears, and be heard in the most inmost recesses of the heart. O suffer me, my dear Brethren, my Fellow-Shepherds, suffer me to remind those of you in particular that have flocks of your own, over whom you are placed the Governors and Overseers, what blessed opportunities ye have of teaching and instructing your People. And may I be permitted to ask you, are you like your Master? Of Him it is said, *He shall feed his flock like a Shepherd; He shall gather the Lambs with his arm, and carry them in his Bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* Isaiah xxxix. 11. Do you give Him that testimony of your Love to Him in following His example? in *feeding his Lambs,* as He has expressly enjoined you? John xxi. 15. *Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the Breasts;* dropping according to the demand of their tender and heedless age, *precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little?* Is it the voice of your lips, and the Language of your inmost soul to them, “ come, “ ye children, hearken unto me, and I will “ teach you the fear of the Lord?” And as to the advanced youths of both sexes in your flock: Have you laboured to acquaint them with the knowledge of their catechism? Not merely obliging

obliging them to say it over to you at one season of the year by Rote; but have you taken earnest and unwearied pains to bring them to a thorough understanding of it? And can they, because you have been laborious in teaching them, give you a satisfactory account of your instructions therein? Additionally to these can you look round upon your *whole* flock, and with comfortable application to yourselves read St. Paul's appeal to the Church at Ephesus; *how He had kept back nothing that was profitable to any of them*, but had shewed them, and taught them publickly, and from house to house, declaring to them all the counsel of God? Acts xx. 20. 27. O my Brethren, how deeply ought we to lay to heart, how frequently to call to mind the solemn Charge given us when we were admitted to the Priesthood: To "consider with ourselves the end
" of our Ministry towards the children of God,
" towards the spouse and body of Christ; and
" see that we never cease our Labour, our
" care and diligence, until we have done all
" that lieth in us, according to our bounden
" Duty, to bring all such as are, or shall be
" committed to our charge, unto that agree-
" ment in the faith and knowledge of God,
" and to that ripeness and perfectness of age
" in Christ, that there be no place left among
" them, either for error in religion, or for vi-
" ciousness in Life*."

2. And here I cannot help putting in a Word to *Parents and Masters*.

* The Bishop's Exhortatory Charge in the Ordination Office for Priest.

Parents! Much of the destruction that is in the world through lack of knowledge will be found chargeable on you. The proper appointed season for laying *the foundation* of saving knowledge in the soul are those early years, in which your children are subject to your authority and teaching. If they die within that time ignorant and uninstructed, their souls will wholly be required at your hands. If they live to years capable of acquiring knowledge through their own industry and care, how much of the guilt even of this negligence will be found lying at your doors! O then be awfully warned in time, you that have children not yet called away in their Ignorance, see to them without a moment's delay. Impart to them what knowledge you have, and desire the instructions of others more fitted and more able to teach them than yourselves. O bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord: Train them up in the way they should go, and when they are old, they will not depart from it.

Masters! You must *instruct* your *Servants*.

Ignorance and lack of knowledge shew themselves in servants under an uncommon degree of stupidity and carelessness. Of whom will the blood of the destroyed souls of servants be required! O ye masters? The question is asked with plainness: The answer must be given with trembling. Are you not Prophets, Priests, and Kings in your own houses? Where is your Household? And what is the state of their Souls? Are they taught by you? Is God
prayed

prayed to by you with them and for them? Tell me, how many souls of your servants have been saved by you? Or at least not perished for want of your endeavours to save them? Tell me of the innumerable times you have laboured in their instruction; the variety of ways and means you have used to make them know themselves and God. Have you no servants that have left your service, or none now in it, that can blame your neglect of them? Have you none that will be able to witness against you at the final day of accounts? Let these inquiring considerations find a place in your heart. Let them regulate your practice. You are much concerned. Do you and your house resolve to serve the Lord.

3. You that are *young* must seek after knowledge in this *early* Period of your Life.

Think how many aged souls are destroyed for lack of knowledge because they did not seek after it in their Youth. How many souls have been saved by a pious education! If you set out in Life unknowing your christian path, as you grow in years you will wander further and further from it. When I see a young person seriously seeking after the Lord, and finding as He seeks Him, my soul feels a pleasure that passeth all understanding. Methinks I see what a life of love this youth will lead through manhood, and die, an old man, as God would have him die. For your encouragement reflect, That it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth; that yoke of Christ which is easy, that burden which is light. What bitterness

bitterness will seize Thee at last if Thou livest to thyself in youth. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer Thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know Thou, that for all these things God will bring Thee into judgment. Remember therefore now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when Thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. Remember too, for an example, that *Josiah* in the *eighth* year of his Reign, while He was yet *young*, began to seek after the God of David his Father; and in the *twelfth* year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, &c. and in the *eighteenth* year of his Reign, when He had purged the Land, he sent to repair the house of the Lord his God. 2. Chron. xxxiv. 1. 3. 8. And the Child *Jesus* when He was *twelve* years old, was found in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the Doctors; both hearing them, and asking them Questions. Luke ii. 46. Go and do likewise: Then shall you, who are sons, be as plants grown up in their youth; and you, that are daughters, as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace.

I have two more considerations to offer to you in this case of seeking after this knowledge of God; and when I have offered these, I shall take my leave of you; and conclude my work with a word or two to those, who have found this Divine Knowledge.

1. Consider, what encouragement you have
to

to be diligent in the use of these ways and means of attaining this saving knowledge. You are at present without it. God would not have you be so. It is His Will that you should know Him and his Truth. See how His own Word speaks of Him. *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the Truth.* 1. Tim. ii. 4. Mark the divine promises in the second Covenant. *They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: For all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest.* Heb. viii. 11. *In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the Book; and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.* Isaiah xxix. 18. *They that erred in spirit shall come to understanding; and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.* V. 24. *I will bring the blind by a way they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness Light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.* Isaiah. xlii. 16. *Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord,* Hos. vi. 3. *Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you.* Prov. i. 23. Would you be a Christian in knowledge? Plead these Scripture-promises. They are all yea and amen; the promises of Him, who is faithful; confirmed by the Word and oath of God. See Heb. vi. 12.—18.

Tho' you be poor and unlearned, you must
learn

learn this saving knowledge; and you need not despair of attaining it. You may, perhaps, be led to imagine, That you can never arrive at it, and that God will not require it. Be not so deceived. There is but one saving Knowledge, and you will assuredly find, if you seek. I myself am acquainted with many poor illiterate people in the lower stations of life, that are richly gifted with Divine Knowledge; and shew it not only with their heads and tongues, but the influence of it in their hearts, and the practise of it in their lives. Therefore be not discouraged. But take with you these Scriptures: *The poor have the Gospel preached unto them: Mat. xi. 5. Hearken, my beloved Brethren; Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which He hath promised to them that love Him? James ii. 5.*

2. Let all of every age seek for Divine Knowledge now, least hereafter your souls experience God's tremendous threatnings and Judgments. Mark these threatnings of God. *Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; They shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me; for that they hated knowledge. Prov. i. 28. 29. Because Thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject Thee. Hos. iv. 6.* If these threatnings do not rouse Thee before they are executed upon Thee, O how wilt Thou lament thy poor soul, and mourn at last when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, *How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof! and have not obeyed the voice*
of

of my Teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed Me! Prov. v. 11. 12. 13. Oh then, work to day; while it is called to day! call upon God while He is near, seek Him while He is to be found; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither Thou goest. Eccles. ix. 10. It is appointed unto Thee once to die; and after this the Judgment. And to what a tremendous Judgment will the grave deliver up thy poor soul! Oh, read it aloud. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. 2. Theff. i. 7. 8. 9. You may be crying, "Mercy; Mercy for poor ignorant people." But there is none. You were wilfully ignorant; and God has no mercy for such. He has Himself declared so. It is a people of no understanding. What is the consequence of this? Therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them; and He that formed them will shew them no favour. Isaiah xxvii. 11. As you did not know God here, He will not know you hereafter. As you disliked to have God in your knowledge upon earth, He will dislike to have you in his presence in heaven. I never knew you; verily I say unto you, I know you not; will be the eternal answer of your unknown God. Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. Depart

from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. Oh my dear Friends; for God's sake, for your souls salvation sake, for JESUS's sake, think of poor lost Negotius.*

If now, after these ways and means are appointed for, and freely offered to you; after these encouragements and invitations on the one hand, and these warnings and threatnings on the other, you will continue to live and die ignorant, and your soul is destroyed for lack of knowledge, I can only join in an hearty approbation of those awful sentences; *If any be ignorant, let him be ignorant. 1. Cor. xiv. 38. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still. Rev. xxii. 11.*

Lastly: Let me speak a word or two of advice and direction to those, who have attained this knowledge. *Hear my Words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto Me, ye that have knowledge. Job. xxxiv. 2. To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, the great mystery of Godliness.*

1. You will, in an especial manner remember St. Paul's observation, and beware. *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. 1. Cor. viii. 1.* See that your knowing so much as you do, doth not exalt you too much in your own eyes; and make you, in the end, contemptible in the eyes of others, and of God, Love to God and your neighbour will be the best proofs of your knowledge; and edify you

* See Pag. 23.—26. and 36. 37.

in God's faith, and fear, and Love. *Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.* 1. Cor. xiii. 4. Be often asking yourselves, Who maketh you to differ from others? And, what have you which you did not receive? You will not therefore be proudly lording it over others, whom you see ignorant around you: But you will pity their case, not upbraid them; tell them the misery of it, persuade them to seek after knowledge by shewing them the necessity of being savingly possessed of it. You will also frequently be looking back on yourselves, as sometime darkness; acknowledging your own former ignorance, saying to God, *So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a Beast before Thee!* Ps. lxxiii. 22. Neither will you be contending with, or striving to out-do each other, in a spirit of self. *Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* Phil. ii. 3. If the Lord has given you wisdom and knowledge, bless Him for it. Would you shew it? You ought. But in what manner? St. James tells you. *Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be*

intreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Chap. iii. V. 13.—17. This scripture is full to the purpose and comprehensive. Think how superior the the exercise of Love is to the gift of knowledge. Hear St. Paul. *Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.* 1. Cor. xiii. 2. Hear also St. Peter. *Giving all diligence, add to your knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, They make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 2. Pet. i. 5.—8.

2. Be cautious, lest you fall again into a course of, and under the dominion of sin, fashioning yourselves according to the former Lusts, in your ignorance, now that you know better. Hear what St. Peter saith. *If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end will be worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.* 2. Pet. ii. 20. 21.

3. Be continually increasing in knowledge. Think (for it is indeed the Trnth of your case) that

that you are always ignorant, and lack of knowledge ; and desire to gain more and more continually. *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* 2. Pet. iii. 18. *For God giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.* Dan. ii. 21.

I have now, in conclusion, only to tell you, as St. Paul tells the Ephesians ; That I cease not to give Thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers ; intreating that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you more and more of the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Him ; The eyes of your understanding being enlightened ; that ye may know what is the hope of his Calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe. Chap. i. V. 16.—19. Or, as He tells the Colosians ; We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his Will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Chap. i. V. 9. 10. And then, tho' we here know but in part, when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away : Tho' now we see through a glass darkly ; yet then face to face : Now we know in part ; but then shall we know even as also we are known. 1. Cor. xiii. 9. 10. 12.

PRAYERS

PRAYERS *collected from the Liturgy of the*
Church of England.

O Merciful God, who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that Thou hast made; nor wouldest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks: (*all ignorant, unconverted sinners:*) take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word; and so lead them in the knowledge and obedience of thy word, that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same. Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord; and from all blindness of heart, good Lord, deliver us. And do Thou, who shewest to them that be in error the light of thy Truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; and give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and to put upon us the armour of light. Thou, Fountain of wisdom, and whom truly to know is everlasting Life, grant us perfectly to know thy Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the Truth, and the Life: Grant us in this world knowledge of thy Truth, and in the world to come Life everlasting, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Almighty

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who hast purchased to thyself an universal church by the precious Blood of thy dear Son; and hast built it upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; we especially pray for the good estate thereof; and beseech Thee mercifully to look upon the same. Do Thou, by whose spirit the whole body of thy church is governed and sanctified, inspire it continually with the spirit of Truth; and cast thy bright Beams of Light upon it. We beseech Thee, as by thy Divine Providence, Thou hast appointed divers Orders in thy church, to give thy grace to all those who are called to any office and administration in the same, that every member of thy church may truly and godly serve Thee. Illuminate all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of thy holy Word: and so replenish them with the Truth of thy doctrine, and endue them with innocency of Life, that both by their life and doctrine, both by their preaching and living, in setting forth thy true and lively word, and shewing it accordingly, they may set forth thy glory, and set forward the salvation of all men. Let thy continually pity cleanse and defend thy church; and from all false doctrine, good Lord, deliver it. Grant, that it being alway preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true Pastors. Make, we beseech, all Bishops and Pastors diligently
to

to preach thy holy Word; and the people obediently to follow the same, and so to follow their doctrine, that they may truly repent according to their preaching, the hearts of the disobedient being turned by them to the wisdom of the just. Give us grace, that being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the Truth of thy holy Gospel; and may it please Thee, that by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by them, all the diseases of our souls may be healed.

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord; that it may please Thee to bring into the way of Truth all such as have erred, and are deceived; that all those who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of Truth; and also that thy ways may be known upon earth, thy saving health unto all nations. O Lord, mercifully look upon, and save thy people: and so fetch them home to thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd. Finally, we beseech Thee to rule and govern thy Holy Church universal in the right way; that it being enlightened and instructed by the heavenly doctrines of thy Evangelists, may so walk in the light of thy Truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Almighty

Almighty and everlasting God, heavenly Father, we, who have been brought out of darkness and error into the clear Light and knowledge of Thee and of thy Son Jesus Christ, give Thee humble Thanks, that thou have vouchsafed to call us to the knowledge of thy grace and faith in Thee. Increase this knowledge and confirm this faith in us evermore. May thy peace, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and Love of Thee, and of thy Son Jesus Christ. And, as in the knowledge of thee standeth our eternal Life, mercifully grant, That we, which know Thee now by faith, may after this Life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



H Y M N I.

THOU, mighty Lord, art God alone;
A Kind of Majesty unknown;
And all thy dazling Glories rise
yond the Reach of Angels Eyes.

Yet through this Earth thy Works proclaim
Some Notice of thy reverend Name;
And, where thy gracious Gospel shines,
We read it in the fairest Lines.

But O! how few of Adam's Race
Have learn'd thy Nature and thy Grace!
While Thousands, ev'n in Lands of Light,
Are buried in *Ægyptian* Night.

They tread thy Courts, thy Word they hear,
 And to thy solemn Rites draw near:
 Yet, tho' Salvation seems so nigh,
 Because they know not God, they die.

Shine, mighty God, with Brightness shine,
 On this benighted Heart of mine:
 O, dart on all, not me alone,
 Celestial Beamings from thy Throne.

Our Souls, reviv'd by Heav'n-born Day,
 Thy radiant Image shall display;
 While all our Faculties unite
 To praise the Lord, who gives us Light.

II.

JESUS, mine Advocate above,
 Make known the Wonders of thy Love.
 Enable with perpetual Light
 The Dulness of our blinded Sight.

Thou see'st the Mind, when lost it lies
 In Shades of Ignorance and Vice.
 Bury'd in Shadows of the Night
 We lie, 'till CHRIST restores the Sight:

WISDOM, descend to heal the Blind,
 And chase the Darkness of the Mind.
 O, dart from Heaven a lively Ray,
 And change our Midnight into Day.

Thy sacred Book we would survey,
 Enlightened with that heavenly Day;
 And ask thy Spirit, with the Word,
 To teach our Souls to know the Lord,

My Mind enlighten with thy Light,
 That I may understand aright
 Thy glorious Gospel's Mystery,
 Which shews the Way to Heaven and Thee.

Poor helpless Worms in Thee possess
Grace, Wisdom, Pow'r and Righteousness,
Thou art our mighty All; may we
Give our whole selves, O Lord, to Thee.

H Y M N II.

HOW heavy is the Night,
That hangs upon our Eyes,
Till CHRIST with his reviving Light
Over our Souls arise!

'His shining Grace can cheer
This Dungeon where I dwell:
'Tis Paradise when He is here;
If He departs, 'tis Hell.

The Pow'rs of Hell agree
To hold our Souls in vain;
He sets the Sons of Bondage free,
And breaks the cursed Chain.

We lift our Hearts to Thee,
O Day-Star from on high;
The Sun itself is but thy Shade,
Yet cheers both Earth and Sky.

Fair Morning-Star, arise,
With living Glories bright;
And pour on these awakening Eyes
A Flood of sacred Light.

O let thy orient Beams
The Night of Sin disperse!
The Mists of Ignorance and Vice
Which shade the Universe!

The horrid Gloom is fled,
Pierc'd by thy beauteous Ray;
Shine, and our wand'ring Footsteps lead
To everlasting Day.

HYMN

H Y M N III

JESUS, the all-atoning Lamb,
 Lover of lost Mankind,
 Salvation in whose only Name
 A sinful World can find.

Long have we sat beneath the Sound
 Of thy Salvation, Lord;
 But still how weak our Faith is found,
 And Knowledge of thy Word!

O Sun of Righteousness, arise
 With healing in thy Wing!
 To my benighted, blinded Eyes
 Light and Salvation bring.

Fountain of Light, to Thee I lift
 These blind, these darken'd Eyes:
 O let me now receive that Gift,
 My Soul without it dies.

O give our Souls to hear and know
 The Gospel's joyful Sound:
 Let Peace attend the Path we go,
 And light our Steps surround.

Unseal the Volume of thy Grace;
 Apply the Gospel-Word;
 Open our Eyes to see thy Face,
 Our Hearts to know Thee, Lord.

All that Thou dost on Earth bestow
 Of Heaven vouchsafe to give:
 Give us, O Lord, thyself to know,
 In Thee to walk and live.

Shew our forgetful Feet the Way
 That leads to joys on high;
 Where Knowledge grows without Decay,
 And Love shall never die.

SOLI DEO GLORIA.